

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 ORM-02 AID-05  
OMB-01 FDRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 TRSE-00 /091 W  
-----031919Z 056428 /46

P R 031345Z JUN 77  
FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0013  
INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN  
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI  
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA  
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO  
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA  
USMISSION GENEVA  
AMEMBASSY MASERU

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 GABORONE 1250

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINS, PGOV, SREF, BC, RH  
SUBJ: CARE OF REFUGEES: VISIT TO CAMPS IN SELEBI-PIKWE AND  
FRANCISTOWN

1. SUMMARY: EMBOFF VISIT TO REFUGEE CAMPS IN SELEBI-PIKWE  
AND FRANCISTOWN REVEALED APPALLING CONDITIONS IN FRANCISTOWN  
CAMP. CHIEF CAUSE ALPEARS TO BE ABSENCE OF DECISIVE POLICY AND  
EFFECTIVE GOB ADMINISTRATION OF REFUGEE PROGRAMS. IN ADDITION TO  
HUMANITARIAN CONSIDERATIONS, PROBLEM OF BAD CONDITIONS MAY WELL  
HAVE UNFORTUNATE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES FOR BOTH GOB AND  
DONORS. THEREFORE, WE INTEND TO DISCUSS SITUATION WITH GOB  
AND CONSIDER POSSIBLE WAYS TO CORRECT CONDITIONS. ACTION  
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REQUESTED: REQUEST DEPARTMENT INFORM EMBASSY ASAP OF MAGNI-  
TUDE AND TIMING OF USG REFUGEE ASSISTANCE TO BOTSWANA TO  
IMPRESS GOB THAT OUR CONCERN WITH PROBLEM OF REFUGEE  
CARE HERE IS LEGITIMATE. END SUMMARY

2. AT INVITATION OF UNHCR RESREP PERKINS, ON MAY 25  
EMBOFF VISITED RHODESIAN REFUGEE CAMPS AT SELEBI-PIKWE

AND FRANCISTOWN TOGETHER WITH FINMIN REP M.L.O. STEVENS, LUSAKA DIRECTOR OF LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION AND TWO REPS FROM NORWEGIAN FOREIGN OFFICE.

3. SELEBI-PIKWE CAMP: THE 950 REFUGEES WERE ADEQUATELY SHELTERED IN MILITARY-STYLE TENTS PROVIDED BY THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION. SANITATION AND KITCHEN FACILITIES SEEMED SUFFICIENT. WE WERE TOLD THAT THE TURNOVER OF REFUGEES TO ZAMBIA WAS PROCEEDING REGULARLY WITH FEW REFUGEES, IF ANY, FORCED TO REMAIN IN CAMP FOR EXCESSIVE PERIODS OF TIME. MAIN REASON SEEMED TO BE THAT CAMP AUTHORITY DISCOURAGES IDENTIFICATION AND ORGANIZATION OF REFUGEES ALONG ZIMBABWE NATIONALIST DIVISIONS. THEREFORE, PASSAGE TO ZAMBIA IS APPARENTLY ON A FIRST-COME-FIRST-SERVED BASIS, WITHOUT REGARD TO THE ZAMBIAN UNWILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT RHODESIAN REFUGEES NOT ALIGNED WITH NKOMO-MUGABE PATRIOTIC FRONT. BY CONTRAST, CAMP IN FRANCISTOWN (SEE PARAS BELOW) ORGANIZED ALONG LINES OF RIGID NATIONALIST FACTIONS WITH RESULT THAT MEMBERS OF MUZOREWA-SITHOLE FACTIONS ARE STUCK - SOME HAVING BEEN THERE FOR MORE THAN A YEAR.

3. NEXT DOOR TO SELEBI-PIKWE TENT TOWN, A PERMANENT REFUGEE CAMP FOR 1000 IS RAPIDLY RISING IN FORM OF FIFTY CONCRETE BLOCK BUNKHOUSES, RECREATION AND DINING HALLS, CLINIC AND MODERN PLUMBING. COMPLETION SCHEDULED FOR END OF JUNE. ACCORDING TO UNHCR REP PERKINS, A SECOND PERMANENT CAMP, PROBABLY FOR 1000 PERSONS, IS BEING PLANNED ALSO IN SELEBI-PIKWE AREA. (SECOND CONFIDENTIAL

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CAMP NOW HAS GOB APPROVAL.)

4. FRANCISTOWN CAMP: BY CONTRAST TO SELEBI-PIKWE, THE REFUGEE CAMP AT FRANCISTOWN IS REMINISCENT OF ANDERSONVILLE. EVEN THOSE AMONG THE VISITORS EXPECTING THE WORST (INCLUDING PERKINS) WERE SHOCKED. ROUGHLY 1800 PEOPLE WERE CRAMMED INTO A STOCKADE DESIGNED FOR 300. PERHAPS A FOURTH ARE CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 14 YEARS. THERE ARE OVER ONE HUNDRED WOMEN AND MORE THAN A FEW INFANTS. SANITATION AND KITCHEN FACILITIES ARE PRIMITIVE, THE STENCH OPPRESSIVE, AND SOAP A MISSING ARTICLE. SOME HAVE NEITHER BLANKETS NOR MATTRESSES. MANY SLEEP IN OPEN OR HAVE BUILT SHANTIES OUT OF CARDBOARD BOXES. FRANCISTOWN CAMP IS ORGANIZED ALONG STRICT ZIMBABWEAN NATIONALIST LINES AND FIGHTS HAVE BROKEN OUT, MOST RECENTLY AND NOTABLY BETWEEN NKOMO AND MUGABE ADHERENTS.

5. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH CONSTRUCTION EFFORTS ARE WELL

UNDERWAY IN SELEBI-PIKWE AND EXISTING TENT TOWN SEEMS WELL RUN WITH ITS 900 REFUGEES, WE DO NOT BELIEVE PRESENT ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT OR EXPANSION PLANS ARE ADEQUATE TO CONTAIN THE GROWING REFUGEE PROBLEM IN BOTSWANA. THIS WOULD BE PARTICULARLY EVIDENT SHOULD THE RHODESIAN CRISIS DEEPEN (AS IS EXPECTED HERE) OR SHOULD EITHER NKOMO OR AIR ZAMBIA TIRE IN THEIR EFFORTS UUB UP OR MAINTAIN AT PRESENT LEVEL CHARTER FLIGHTS TO ZAMBIA (FOURTEEN VISCOUNT CHARTERS A WEEK, TAKING A MIX OF SELEBI-PIKWE AND FRANCISTOWN REFUGEES, ARE RUNNING BETWEEN SELEBI-PIKWE AND LUSAKA). MOREOVER, WE ARE TOLD THAT POPULATION OF SELEBI-PIKWE TENT TOWN, NOW A MANAGEABLE 950, HAS RISEN AT TIMES TO TWO THOUSAND MAKING THE SITUATION VIRTUALLY INTOLERABLE.

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 ORM-02 AID-05

OMB-01 FDRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 TRSE-00 /091 W

-----031920Z 058675 /45

P R 031345Z JUN 77

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0014

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

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USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY MASERU

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 GABORONE 1250

7. IT APPEARS THAT CHIEF STUMBLING BLOCK TO CORRECTING THIS GRIEVOUS SITUATION IS LESS THE LACK OF MONEY THAN IT IS THE ABSENCE OF CLEAR-CUT POLICY AND INSUFFICIENT GOB BUREAUCRATIC MACHINERY SET UP TO DEAL WITH THE

REFUGEES. POLICY IN PART REFLECTS NATURAL GOB RELUCTANCE TO MAKE REFUGEES' LIFE TOO PALATABLE FOR FEAR OF ATTRACTING EVEN MORE REFUGEES; E.G., EMBOFF INQUIRED AND LEARNED THAT SOME MONTHS AGO THE GOB DECIDED TO HALT THE PROVISION OF SOAP TO THE FRANCISTOWN CAMP ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT WAS "TOO EXPENSIVE". BEHIND THE CONTINUING DEBATE WITHIN GOB (AND APPARENT HEARTLESS UNCONCERN) ABOUT HOW MUCH TO DO FOR REFUGEES LIE CRITICAL QUESTIONS OF PRESENT AND FUTURE RELATIONS WITH INDEPENDENT ZIMBABWE. IN PRACTICAL TERMS, COOR-  
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DINATION ON REFUGEES MATTERS BETWEEN FRANCISTOWN AND GABORONE APPEARS MINIMAL, WITH THE FORMER NO LONGER REPORTING DESPERATE CONDITIONS (HAVING OFTEN BEEN REFUSED HELP) AND THE LATTER NOT TAKING A KEEN DIRECT INTEREST IN THEM. INDEED, THE CHIEF GOB OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR REFUGEES, ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY TIBONE, LACKS STAFF TO COPE ADEQUATELY WITH REFUGEE CARE, AND IS SWAMPED WITH OTHER DUTIES.

8. WITH GOB FAILING TO GRAPPLE EFFECTIVELY WITH REFUGEE CARE, UNHCR REP PERKINS IS PRESSED MORE AND MORE INTO THE ROLE OF ADMINISTRATOR, WORRYING OVER THE REQUISITION OF COOKING POTS AND BLANKETS FOR CAMPS TWO AND THREE HUNDRED MILES AWAY. THE DIVISION OF LABOR BETWEEN THE UNHCR AND THE GOB IS UNCLEAR; MUCH WORK PROBABLY FALLS BETWEEN THE CRACKS, PARTICULARLY IN THE FIELD OF LONG-RANGE PLANNING. (WE BELIEVE, FOR EXAMPLE, GOB SHOULD ESTABLISH WAREHOUSE FOR POSSIBLE CONTINGENCY OF UP TO TEN THOUSAND REFUGEES SO THAT CRITICAL SHORTAGES WOULD NOT OCCUR IN CAMPS.) CAMPS ARE NOW RUN ON HAND-TO-MOUTH BASIS WITH THOSE IN CHARGE AT ALL LEVELS DEBATING SUCH POINTS AS WHETHER TO ADD A COOKING POT TO THE FRANCISTOWN CAMP KITCHEN.

9. RECOMMENDATION AND ACTION REQUESTED: THE EMBASSY BELIEVES WE MUST DEMONSTRATE TO THE GOB OUR CONCERN OVER THE PLIGHT OF THE REFUGEES AND WILLINGNESS TO ASSIST. THIS MEANS WE MUST FIRST IMPRESS THE GOB WITH THE FACT THAT, BEYOND THE MODEST 36,000 DOLLAR US CONTRIBUTION THROUGH UNHCR, OUR CONCERN IS BACKED BY CONTINUING USG FINANCIAL SUPPORT. ONCE WE HAVE CONFIRMATION OF FY '77 ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES (INCLUDING AT UNIVERSITY LEVELS AS OUTLINED IN GABORONE 1209) WE CAN BEGIN TO ASSUME A MORE ACTIVE ROLE. IN THIS CONNECTION, I URGE ALL PARTIES END CURRENT PROCEDURAL WRANGLING (MBABANE 1428) AND FOCUS ON OBTAINING LONG-DELAYED ASSISTANCE HRE TO REFUGEES FROM ZIMBABWE AND  
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SOWETO.  
NORLAND

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## Message Attributes

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